



May 16, 2024

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

**City of Columbus – Franklin County
SWWTP Organics Receiving & Bioenergy Equipment
Loan number: CS390274-0512**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for the purchase and offsite storage of equipment for the future building at the Organics & Bioenergy Utilization Facility at the Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant in Columbus which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) below-market interest rate revolving loan program. The LER describes the project, its costs, and expected environmental benefits. Making available this LER fulfills Ohio EPA’s environmental review and public notice requirements for this loan program.

Ohio EPA analyzes environmental effects of proposed projects as part of its WPCLF program review and approval process. We have concluded that the proposed project should not result in significant adverse environmental impacts. This project’s relatively narrow scope and lack of environmental impacts qualifies it for the LER rather than a more comprehensive Environmental Assessment. More information can be obtained by calling or writing the person named at the end of the attached LER.

Upon issuance of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) determination, award of funds may proceed without further environmental review or public comment unless new information shows that environmental conditions of the proposed project have changed significantly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Courtright".

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment



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Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

Project: SWWTP Organics Receiving & Bioenergy Equipment

Applicant: City of Columbus
910 Dublin Road
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Loan Number: CS390274-0512

Project Summary

The City of Columbus in Franklin County has requested \$11.1 million from the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) for the purchase and storage offsite of equipment for the future building at the Organics & Bioenergy Utilization Facility project at Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant. As this is strictly a loan for equipment purchase and storage only, environmental impacts are not expected.

History & Existing Conditions

Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant (SWWTP) is one of two large municipal wastewater treatment plants operated by the City of Columbus.

This project will align with Columbus' Climate Action Plan (CAP). Some of the goals addressed in the CAP are a 50% reduction in organic waste and 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Project Description

Columbus plans to purchase new equipment which will be stored at by the suppliers at multiple facilities for two years. This project will provide equipment purchase for a project that ultimately will utilize the biogas generated in the SWWTP anaerobic digestion system to convert to bioenergy to help fuel the plant and save on electricity costs as well as waste disposal reduction.

Implementation

Project Costs

Columbus plans to borrow \$11.1 million from the WPCLF and qualifies for the Contract Interest Rate. The city is also pursuing a tax credit through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The WPCLF offers subsidized rates as compared to the current market rate of 3.85%. WPCLF rates are set monthly.

Local Economy

The current Columbus residential sewer bill is approximately \$647 per year. Projected residential sewer bills with the implementation of this and other associated wastewater projects are expected to increase to approximately \$866 per year, or 1.5% of the median household income (MHI) of

Columbus, which is \$58,575.

By using WPCLF financing for this project, Columbus has minimized the economic impact on customers.

Project Schedule

The anticipated loan award will occur in May 2024; equipment purchase will occur shortly thereafter.

Public Participation

The City of Columbus' Public Utilities webpage details proposed Capital Improvement Projects within the Division of Sewerage & Drainage. Contact information is provided for any public questions or concerns.

Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on its web page: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements> and will provide it upon request to interested parties. Information supporting this Limited Environmental Review (LER) is available from the project contact named below.

Conclusion

The proposed project meets the criteria for a Limited Environmental Review (LER); namely, it is an action for the replacement of existing treatment works. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for an LER; specifically, the proposed project:

Has no significant environmental effect, no effect on high value environmental resources, and does not require extensive specific impact mitigation.

This loan is for equipment purchase only and will not affect environmental features.

Is cost effective and not controversial.

There is no feasible alternative for equipment purchase. DEFA is unaware of any specific opposition to or controversy about this project.

Does not create a new, or relocate an existing discharge to surface or ground waters, and will not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or the loading of pollutants from an existing source or from new facilities to receiving waters; and will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population.

This project involves equipment purchase and storage offsite only. The project will not impact discharges, nor provide capacity to serve a greater population.

Based upon Ohio EPA's review of the planning information and the materials presented in this Limited Environmental Review, we have concluded that there will be no significant adverse impacts from the proposed project as it relates to the environmental features discussed previously. This is because these features do not exist in the project area, the features exist but will not be adversely affected, or the impacts will be temporary and mitigated.

This project will ultimately provide equipment for the construction of a facility to meet the goals of the city's Climate Action Plan.

Contact Information

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